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had never been less than 20,000 men ; latterly it had risen far above 30,000. The besieging force had never exceeded 10,000 men ; in August it numbered but 3,050, and of these 2,007 were on daily duty. During the whole siege, 3,837 men had fallen, exclusive of those who succumbed to sickness ; and on the 14th of September alone almost one third of the assaulting force swelled the list of killed and wounded. These numbers speak more eloquently than any language we could use. Neither is there needed any comment of ours. The soldiers of America, — be they of the North or South, — who have given to the world such signal examples of courage and endurance, will need no help to estimate aright the constancy and fortitude of the little army that held the ridge before Delhi.

R. D. OSBORN.

ART. IX. — *The Spanish Gypsy. A Poem.* By GEORGE ELIOT.
Boston : Ticknor and Fields. 1868.

I KNOW not whether George Eliot has any enemies, nor why she should have any ; but if perchance she has, I can imagine them to have hailed the announcement of a poem from her pen as a piece of particularly good news. “ Now, finally,” I fancy them saying, “ this sadly overrated author will exhibit all the weakness that is in her ; now she will prove herself what we have all along affirmed her to be, — not a serene, self-directing genius of the first order, knowing her powers and respecting them, and content to leave well enough alone, but a mere showy rhetorician, possessed and prompted, not by the humble spirit of truth, but by an insatiable longing for applause.” Suppose Mr. Tennyson were to come out with a novel, or Madame George Sand were to produce a tragedy in French alexandrines. The reader will agree with me, that these are hard suppositions ; yet the world has seen stranger things, and been reconciled to them. Nevertheless, with the best possible will toward our illustrious novelist, it is easy to put ourselves in the shoes of these hypothetical detractors. No one, assuredly, but George

Eliot could mar George Eliot's reputation ; but there was room for the fear that she might do it. This reputation was essentially prose-built, and in the attempt to insert a figment of verse of the magnitude of "The Spanish Gypsy," it was quite possible that she might injure its fair proportions.

In consulting her past works, for approval of their hopes and their fears, I think both her friends and her foes would have found sufficient ground for their arguments. Of all our English prose-writers of the present day, I think I may say, that, as a writer simply, a mistress of style, I have been very near preferring the author of "Silas Marner" and of "Romola," — the author, too, of "Felix Holt." The motive of my great regard for her style I take to have been that I fancied it such perfect solid prose. Brilliant and lax as it was in tissue, it seemed to contain very few of the silken threads of poetry ; it lay on the ground like a carpet, instead of floating in the air like a banner. If my impression was correct, "The Spanish Gypsy" is not a genuine poem. And yet, looking over the author's novels in memory, looking them over in the light of her unexpected assumption of the poetical function, I find it hard at times not to mistrust my impression. I like George Eliot well enough, in fact, to admit, for the time, that I might have been in the wrong. If I had liked her less, if I had rated lower the quality of her prose, I should have estimated coldly the possibilities of her verse. Of course, therefore, if, as I am told many persons do in England, who consider carpenters and weavers and millers' daughters no legitimate subject for reputable fiction, I had denied her novels any qualities at all, I should have made haste, on reading the announcement of her poem, to speak of her as the world speaks of a lady, who, having reached a comfortable middle age, with her shoulders decently covered, "for reasons deep below the reach of thought," (to quote our author,) begins to go out to dinner in a low-necked dress "of the period," and say in fine, in three words, that she was going to make a fool of herself.

But here, meanwhile, is the book before me, to arrest all this *a priori* argumentation. Time enough has elapsed since its appearance for most readers to have uttered their opinions, and for the general verdict of criticism to have been formed.

In looking over several of the published reviews, I am struck with the fact that those immediately issued are full of the warmest delight and approval, and that, as the work ceases to be a novelty, objections, exceptions, and protests multiply. This is quite logical. Not only does it take a much longer time than the reviewer on a weekly journal has at his command to properly appreciate a work of the importance of "The Spanish Gypsy," but the poem was actually much more of a poem than was to be expected. The foremost feeling of many readers must have been — it was certainly my own — that we had hitherto only half known George Eliot. Adding this dazzling new half to the old one, readers constructed for the moment a really splendid literary figure. But gradually the old half began to absorb the new, and to assimilate its virtues and failings, and critics finally remembered that the cleverest writer in the world is after all nothing and no one but himself.

The most striking quality in "The Spanish Gypsy," on a first reading, I think, is its extraordinary rhetorical energy and elegance. The richness of the author's style in her novels gives but an inadequate idea of the splendid generosity of diction displayed in the poem. She is so much of a thinker and an observer that she draws very heavily on her powers of expression, and one may certainly say that they not only never fail her, but that verbal utterance almost always bestows upon her ideas a peculiar beauty and fulness, apart from their significance. The result produced in this manner, the reader will see, may come very near being poetry; it is assuredly eloquence. The faults in the present work are very seldom faults of weakness, except in so far as it is weak to lack an absolute mastery of one's powers; they arise rather from an excess of rhetorical energy, from a desire to attain to perfect fulness and roundness of utterance; they are faults of overstatement. It is by no means uncommon to find a really fine passage injured by the addition of a clause which dilutes the idea under pretence of completing it. The poem opens, for instance, with a description of

" Broad-breasted Spain, leaning with equal love
 (A calm earth-goddess crowned with corn and vines)
On the Mid Sea that moans with memories,
And on the untravelled Ocean, *whose vast tides*
 Pant dumbly passionate with dreams of youth."

The second half of the fourth line and the fifth, here, seem to me as poor as the others are good. So in the midst of the admirable description of Don Silva, which precedes the first scene in the castle: —

“ A spirit framed
Too proudly special for obedience,
Too subtly pondering for mastery :
Born of a goddess with a mortal sire,
Heir of flesh-fettered, weak divinity,
Doom-gifted with long resonant consciousness
And perilous heightening of the sentient soul.”

The transition to the lines in *Italic* is like the passage from a well-ventilated room into a vacuum. On reflection, we see “long resonant consciousness” to be a very good term; but, as it stands, it certainly lacks breathing-space. On the other hand, there are more than enough passages of the character of the following to support what I have said of the genuine splendor of the style: —

“ I was right !
These gems have life in them : their colors speak,
Say what words fail of. So do many things, —
The scent of jasmine and the fountain’s plash,
The moving shadows on the far-off hills,
The slanting moonlight and our clasping hands.
O Silva, there ’s an ocean round our words,
That overflows and drowns them. Do you know,
Sometimes when we sit silent, and the air
Breathes gently on us from the orange-trees,
It seems that with the whisper of a word
Our souls must shrink, get poorer, more apart ?
Is it not true ?

DON SILVA.

Yes, dearest, it is true.
Speech is but broken light upon the depth
Of the unspoken : even your loved words
Float in the larger meaning of your voice
As something dimmer.”

I may say in general, that the author’s admirers must have found in “The Spanish Gypsy” a presentment of her various special gifts stronger and fuller, on the whole, than any to be found in her novels. Those who valued her chiefly for her humor — the gentle humor which provokes a smile, but deprecates a laugh — will recognize that delightful gift in Blasco, and

Lorenzo, and Roldan, and Juan, — slighter in quantity than in her prose-writings, but quite equal, I think, in quality. Those who prize most her descriptive powers will see them wondrously well embodied in these pages. As for those who have felt compelled to declare that she possesses the Shakespearian touch, they must consent, with what grace they may, to be disappointed. I have never thought our author a great dramatist, nor even a particularly dramatic writer. A real dramatist, I imagine, could never have reconciled himself to the odd mixture of the narrative and dramatic forms by which the present work is distinguished; and that George Eliot's genius should have needed to work under these conditions seems to me strong evidence of the partial and incomplete character of her dramatic instincts. An English critic lately described her, with much correctness, as a critic rather than a creator of characters. She puts her figures into action very successfully, but on the whole she thinks for them more than they think for themselves. She thinks, however, to wonderfully good purpose. In none of her works are there two more distinctly human representations than the characters of Silva and Juan. The latter, indeed, if I am not mistaken, ranks with Tito Melema and Hetty Sorrel, as one of her very best conceptions.

What is commonly called George Eliot's humor consists largely, I think, in a certain tendency to epigram and compactness of utterance, — not the short-clipped, biting, ironical epigram, but a form of statement in which a liberal dose of truth is embraced in terms none the less comprehensive for being very firm and vivid. Juan says of Zarca that

"He is one of those
Who steal the keys from snoring Destiny,
And make the prophets lie."

Zarca himself, speaking of "the steadfast mind, the undivided will to seek the good," says most admirably, —

"T is that compels the elements, *and wrings*
A human music from the indifferent air."

When the Prior pronounces Fedalma's blood "unchristian as the leopard's," Don Silva retorts with, —

"Unchristian as the Blessed Virgin's blood,
Before the angel spoke the word, 'All hail!'"

Zarca qualifies his daughter's wish to maintain her faith to her lover, at the same time that she embraces her father's fortunes, as

"A woman's dream, — who thinks by smiling well
To ripen figs in frost."

This happy brevity of expression is frequently revealed in those rich descriptive passages and touches in which the work abounds. Some of the lines taken singly are excellent: —

and, "And bells make Catholic the trembling air";
and again, "Sad as the twilight, all his clothes ill-girt";
"Mournful professor of high drollery."

Here is a very good line and a half: —

"The old rain-fretted mountains in their robes
Of shadow-broken gray."

Here, finally, are three admirable pictures: —

"The stars thin-scattered made the heavens large,
Bending in slow procession; in the east,
Emergent from the dark waves of the hills,
Seeming a little sister of the moon,
Glowed Venus all unquenched."

"Spring afternoons, when delicate shadows fall
Pencilled upon the grass; high summer morns,
When white light rains upon the quiet sea,
And cornfields flush for ripeness."

"Scent the fresh breath of the height-loving herbs,
That, trodden by the pretty parted hoofs
Of nimble goats, sigh at the innocent bruise,
And with a mingled difference exquisite
Pour a sweet burden on the buoyant air."

But now to reach the real substance of the poem, and to allow the reader to appreciate the author's treatment of human character and passion, I must speak briefly of the story. I shall hardly misrepresent it, when I say that it is a very old one, and that it illustrates that very common occurrence in human affairs, — the conflict of love and duty. Such, at least, is the general impression made by the poem as it stands. It is very possible that the author's primary intention may have had a breadth which has been curtailed in the execution of the work, — that it was her wish to present a struggle between na-

ture and culture, between education and the instinct of race. You can detect in such a theme the stuff of a very good drama, — a somewhat stouter stuff, however, than “*The Spanish Gypsy*” is made of. George Eliot, true to that didactic tendency for which she has hitherto been remarkable, has preferred to make her heroine’s predicament a problem in morals, and has thereby, I think, given herself hard work to reach a satisfactory solution. She has, indeed, committed herself to a signal error, in a psychological sense, — that of making a Gypsy girl with a conscience. Either Fedalma was a perfect Zincala in temper and instinct, — in which case her adhesion to her father and her race was a blind, passionate, sensuous movement, which is almost expressly contradicted, — or else she was a pure and intelligent Catholic, in which case nothing in the nature of a struggle can be predicated. The character of Fedalma, I may say, comes very near being a failure, — a very beautiful one ; but in point of fact it misses it.

It misses it, I think, thanks to that circumstance which in reading and criticising “*The Spanish Gypsy*” we must not cease to bear in mind, the fact that the work is emphatically a *romance*. We may contest its being a poem, but we must admit that it is a romance in the fullest sense of the word. Whether the term may be absolutely defined I know not ; but we may say of it, comparing it with the novel, that it carries much farther that compromise with reality which is the basis of all imaginative writing. In the romance this principle of compromise pervades the superstructure as well as the basis. The most that we exact is that the fable be consistent with itself. Fedalma is not a real Gypsy maiden. The conviction is strong in the reader’s mind that a genuine Spanish Zincala would have somehow contrived both to follow her tribe and to keep her lover. If Fedalma is not real, Zarca is even less so. He is interesting, imposing, picturesque ; but he is very far, I take it, from being a genuine *Gypsy* chieftain. They are both ideal figures, — the offspring of a strong mental desire for creatures well rounded in their elevation and heroism, — creatures who should illustrate the nobleness of human nature divorced from its smallness. Don Silva has decidedly more of the common stuff of human feeling, more charming natural

passion and weakness. But he, too, is largely a vision of the intellect; his constitution is adapted to the atmosphere and the climate of romance. Juan, indeed, has one foot well planted on the lower earth; but Juan is only an accessory figure. I have said enough to lead the reader to perceive that the poem should not be regarded as a rigid transcript of actual or possible fact, — that the action goes on in an artificial world, and that properly to comprehend it he must regard it with a generous mind.

Viewed in this manner, as efficient figures in an essentially ideal and romantic drama, Fedalma and Zarca seem to gain vastly, and to shine with a brilliant radiance. If we reduce Fedalma to the level of the heroines of our modern novels, in which the interest aroused by a young girl is in proportion to the similarity of her circumstances to those of the reader, and in which none but the commonest feelings are required, provided they be expressed with energy, we shall be tempted to call her a solemn and cold-blooded jilt. In a novel it would have been next to impossible for the author to make the heroine renounce her lover. In novels we not only forgive that weakness which is common and familiar and human, but we actually demand it. But in poetry, although we are compelled to adhere to the few elementary passions of our nature, we do our best to dress them in a new and exquisite garb. Men and women in a poetical drama are nothing, if not distinguished.

“ Our dear young love, — its breath was happiness !
But it had grown upon a larger life,
Which tore its roots asunder.”

These words are uttered by Fedalma at the close of the poem, and in them she emphatically claims the distinction of having her own private interests invaded by those of a people. The manner of her kinship with the Zincali is in fact a very much “larger life” than her marriage with Don Silva. We may, indeed, challenge the probability of her relationship to her tribe impressing her mind with a force equal to that of her love, — her “dear young love.” We may declare that this is an unnatural and violent result. For my part, I think it is very far from violent; I think the author has employed her art in re-

ducing the apparently arbitrary quality of her preference for her tribe. I say reducing ; I do not say effacing ; because it seems to me, as I have intimated, that just at this point her art has been wanting, and we are not sufficiently prepared for Fedalma's movement by a sense of her Gypsy temper and instincts. Still, we are in some degree prepared for it by various passages in the opening scenes of the book, — by all the magnificent description of her dance in the Plaza :—

“ All gathering influences culminate
And urge Fedalma. Earth and heaven seem one,
Life a glad trembling on the outer edge
Of unknown rapture. Swifter now she moves,
Filling the measure with a double beat
And widening circle ; now she seems to glow
With more declaréd presence, glorified.
Circling, she lightly bends, and lifts on high
The multitudinous-sounding tambourine,
And makes it ring and boom, then lifts it higher,
Stretching her left arm beauteous.”

We are better prepared for it, however, than by anything else, by the whole impression we receive of the exquisite refinement and elevation of the young girl's mind, — by all that makes her so bad a Gypsy. She possesses evidently a very high-strung intellect, and her whole conduct is in a higher key, as I may say, than that of ordinary women, or even ordinary heroines. She is natural, I think, in a poetical sense. She is consistent with her own prodigiously superfine character. From a lower point of view than that of the author, she lacks several of the desirable feminine qualities, — a certain womanly warmth and petulance, a graceful irrationality. Her mind is very much too lucid, and her aspirations too lofty. Her conscience, especially, is decidedly over-active. But this is a distinction which she shares with all the author's heroines, — Dinah Morris, Maggie Tulliver, Romola, and Esther Lyon, — a distinction, moreover, for which I should be very sorry to hold George Eliot to account. There are most assuredly women and women. While Messrs. Charles Reade and Wilkie Collins, and Miss Braddon and her school, tell one half the story, it is no more than fair that the author of “*The Spanish Gypsy*” should, all unassisted, attempt to relate the other.

Whenever a story really interests one, he is very fond of paying it the compliment of imagining it otherwise constructed, and of capping it with a different termination. In the present case, one is irresistibly tempted to fancy "The Spanish Gypsy" in prose, — a compact, regular drama: not in George Eliot's prose, however: in a diction much more nervous and heated and rapid, written with short speeches as well as long. (The reader will have observed the want of brevity, retort, interruption, rapid alternation, in the dialogue of the poem. The characters all talk, as it were, standing still.) In such a play as the one indicated one imagines a truly dramatic Fedalma, — a passionate, sensuous, irrational Bohemian, as elegant as good breeding and native good taste could make her, and as pure as her actual sister in the poem, — but rushing into her father's arms with a cry of joy, and losing the sense of her lover's sorrow in what the author has elsewhere described as "the hurrying ardor of action." Or in the way of a different termination, suppose that Fedalma should for the time value at once her own love and her lover's enough to make her prefer the latter's destiny to that represented by her father. Imagine, then, that, after marriage, the Gypsy blood and nature should begin to flow and throb in quicker pulsations, — and that the poor girl should sadly contrast the sunny freedom and lawless joy of her people's lot with the splendid rigidity and formalism of her own. You may conceive at this point that she should pass from sadness to despair, and from despair to revolt. Here the catastrophe may occur in a dozen different ways. Fedalma may die before her husband's eyes, of unsatisfied longing for the fate she has rejected; or she may make an attempt actually to recover her fate, by wandering off and seeking out her people. The cultivated mind, however, it seems to me, imperiously demands, that, on finally overtaking them, she shall die of mingled weariness and shame, as neither a good Gypsy nor a good Christian, but simply a good figure for a tragedy. But there is a degree of levity which almost amounts to irreverence in fancying this admirable performance as anything other than it is.

After Fedalma comes Zarca, and here our imagination flags. Not so George Eliot's: for as simple imagination, I

think that in the conception of this impressive and unreal figure it appears decidedly at its strongest. With Zarca, we stand at the very heart of the realm of romance. There is a truly grand simplicity, to my mind, in the outline of his character, and a remarkable air of majesty in his poise and attitude. He is a *père noble* in perfection. His speeches have an exquisite eloquence. In strictness, he is to the last degree unreal, illogical, and rhetorical; but a certain dramatic unity is diffused through his character by the depth and energy of the colors in which he is painted. With a little less simplicity, his figure would be decidedly modern. As it stands, it is neither modern nor mediæval; it belongs to the world of intellectual dreams and visions. The reader will admit that it is a vision of no small beauty, the conception of a stalwart chieftain who distils the cold exaltation of his purpose from the utter loneliness and obloquy of his race:—

“Wanderers whom no God took knowledge of,
To give them laws, to fight for them, or blight
Another race to make them ampler room;—
A people with no home even in memory,
No dimmest lore of giant ancestors
To make a common hearth for piety”;

a people all ignorant of

“The rich heritage, the milder life,
Of nations fathered by a mighty Past.”

Like Don Silva, like Juan, like Sephardo, Zarca is decidedly a man of intellect.

Better than Fedalma or than Zarca is the remarkably beautiful and elaborate portrait of Don Silva, in whom the author has wished to present a young nobleman as splendid in person and in soul as the dawning splendor of his native country. In the composition of his figure, the real and the romantic, brilliancy and pathos, are equally commingled. He cannot be said to stand out in vivid relief. As a piece of painting, there is nothing commanding, aggressive, brutal, as I may say, in his lineaments. But they will bear close scrutiny. Place yourself within the circumscription of the work, breathe its atmosphere, and you will see that Don Silva is portrayed with a delicacy to which English story-tellers, whether in prose or

verse, have not accustomed us. There are better portraits in Browning, but there are also worse; in Tennyson there are none as good; and in the other great poets of the present century there are no attempts, that I can remember, to which we may compare it. In spite of the poem being called in honor of his mistress, Don Silva is in fact the central figure in the work. Much more than Fedalma, he is the passive object of the converging blows of Fate. The young girl, after all, did what was easiest; but he is entangled in a network of agony, without choice or compliance of his own. It is an admirable subject admirably treated. I may describe it by saying that it exhibits a perfect aristocratic nature, (born and bred at a time when democratic aspirations were quite irrelevant to happiness,) dragged down by no fault of its own into the vulgar mire of error and expiation. The interest which attaches to Don Silva's character revolves about its exquisite human weakness, its manly scepticism, its antipathy to the trenchant, the absolute, and arbitrary. At the opening of the book, the author rehearses his various titles:—

“ Such titles with their blazonry are his
Who keeps this fortress, sworn Alcaÿde,
Lord of the valley, master of the town,
Commanding whom he will, himself commanded
By Christ his Lord, who sees him from the cross,
And from bright heaven where the Mother pleads;
By good Saint James, upon the milk-white steed,
Who leaves his bliss to fight for chosen Spain;
By the dead gaze of all his ancestors;
And by the mystery of his Spanish blood,
Charged with the awe and glories of the past.”

Throughout the poem, we are conscious, during the evolution of his character, of the presence of these high mystical influences, which, combined with his personal pride, his knightly temper, his delicate culture, form a splendid background for passionate dramatic action. The finest pages in the book, to my taste, are those which describe his lonely vigil in the Gypsy camp, after he has failed in winning back Fedalma, and has pledged his faith to Zarca. Placed under guard, and left to his own stern thoughts, his soul begins to react against the hideous disorder to which he has committed it, to proclaim its

kinship with "customs and bonds and laws," and its sacred need of the light of human esteem : —

"Now awful Night,
Ancestral mystery of mysteries, came down
Past all the generations of the stars,
And visited his soul with touch more close
Than when he kept that closer, briefer watch,
Under the church's roof, beside his arms,
And won his knighthood."

To be appreciated at their worth, these pages should be attentively read. Nowhere has the author's marvellous power of expression, the mingled dignity and pliancy of her style, obtained a greater triumph. She has reproduced the expression of a mind with the same vigorous distinctness as that with which a great painter represents the expression of a countenance.

The character which accords best with my own taste is that of the minstrel Juan, an extremely generous conception. He fills no great part in the drama; he is by nature the reverse of a man of action; and, strictly, the story could very well dispense with him. Yet, for all that, I should be sorry to lose him, and lose thereby the various excellent things which are said of him and by him. I do not include his songs among the latter. Only two of the lyrics in the work strike me as good: the song of Pablo, "The world is great: the birds all fly from me"; and, in a lower degree, the chant of the Zinicali, in the fourth book. But I do include the words by which he is introduced to the reader : —

"Juan was a troubadour revived,
Freshening life's dusty road with babbling rills
Of wit and song, living 'mid harnessed men
With limbs ungalled by armor, ready so
To soothe them weary and to cheer them sad.
Guest at the board, companion in the camp,
A crystal mirror to the life around:
Flashing the comment keen of simple fact
Defined in words; lending brief lyric voice
To grief and sadness; hardly taking note
Of difference betwixt his own and others';
But rather singing as a listener
To the deep moans, the cries, the wildstrong joys
Of universal Nature, old, yet young."

When Juan talks at his ease, he strikes the note of poetry much more surely than when he lifts his voice in song : —

“ Yet if your graciousness will not disdain
A poor plucked songster, shall he sing to you ?
Some lay of afternoons, — some ballad strain
Of those who ached once, but are sleeping now
Under the sun-warmed flowers ? ”

Juan’s link of connection with the story is, in the first place, that he is in love with Fedalma, and, in the second, as a piece of local color. His attitude with regard to Fedalma is indicated with beautiful delicacy : —

“ O lady, constancy has kind and rank.
One man’s is lordly, plump, and bravely clad,
Holds its head high, and tells the world its name :
Another man’s is beggared, must go bare,
And shiver through the world, the jest of all,
But that it puts the motley on, and plays
Itself the jester.”

Nor are his merits lost upon her, as she declares, with no small force, —

“ No ! on the close-thronged spaces of the earth
A battle rages ; Fate has carried me
’Mid the thick arrows : I will keep my stand, —
Nor shrink, and let the shaft pass by my breast
To pierce another. O, ’t is written large,
The thing I have to do. But you, dear Juan,
Renounce, endure, are brave, unurged by aught
Save the sweet overflow of your good-will.”

In every human imbroglio, be it of a comic or a tragic nature, it is good to think of an observer standing aloof, the critic, the idle commentator of it all, taking notes, as we may say, in the interest of truth. The exercise of this function is the chief ground of our interest in Juan. Yet as a man of action, too, he once appeals most irresistibly to our sympathies : I mean in the admirable scene with Hinda, in which he wins back his stolen finery by his lute-playing. This scene, which is written in prose, has a simple realistic power which renders it a truly remarkable composition.

Of the different parts of “ The Spanish Gypsy ” I have spoken with such fulness as my space allows : it remains to

add a few remarks upon the work as a whole. Its great fault is simply that it is not a genuine poem. It lacks the hurrying quickness, the palpitating warmth, the bursting melody of such a creation. A genuine poem is a tree that breaks into blossom and shakes in the wind. George Eliot's elaborate composition is like a vast mural design in mosaic-work, where great slabs and delicate morsels of stone are laid together with wonderful art, where there are plenty of noble lines and generous hues, but where everything is rigid, measured, and cold, — nothing dazzling, magical, and vocal. The poem contains a number of faulty lines, — lines of twelve, of eleven, and of eight syllables, — of which it is easy to suppose that a more sacredly commissioned versifier would not have been guilty. Occasionally, in the search for poetic effect, the author decidedly misses her way : —

“ All her being paused

In resolution, *as some leonine wave*,” etc.

A “leonine” wave is rather too much of a lion and too little of a wave. The work possesses imagination, I think, in no small measure. The description of Silva's feelings during his sojourn in the Gypsy camp is strongly pervaded by it ; or if perchance the author achieved these passages without rising on the wings of fancy, her glory is all the greater. But the poem is wanting in passion. The reader is annoyed by a perpetual sense of effort and of intellectual tension. It is a characteristic of George Eliot, I imagine, to allow her impressions to linger a long time in her mind, so that by the time they are ready for use they have lost much of their original freshness and vigor. They have acquired, of course, a number of artificial charms, but they have parted with their primal natural simplicity. In this poem we see the landscape, the people, the manners of Spain as through a glass smoked by the flame of meditative vigils, just as we saw the outward aspect of Florence in “*Romola*.” The brightness of coloring is there, the artful *chiaroscuro*, and all the consecrated properties of the scene ; but they gleam in an artificial light. The background of the action is admirable in spots, but is cold and mechanical as a whole. The immense rhetorical ingenuity and elegance of the work, which constitute its main distinction, interfere

with the faithful, uncompromising reflection of the primary elements of the subject.

The great merit of the characters is that they are marvelously well *understood*, — far better understood than in the ordinary picturesque romance of action, adventure, and mystery. And yet they are not understood to the bottom ; they retain an indefinably factitious air, which is not sufficiently justified by their position as ideal figures. The reader who has attentively read the closing scene of the poem will know what I mean. The scene shows remarkable talent ; it is eloquent, it is beautiful ; but it is arbitrary and fanciful, more than unreal, — untrue. The reader silently chafes and protests, and finally breaks forth and cries, “ O for a blast from the outer world ! ” Silva and Fedalma have developed themselves so daintily and elaborately within the close-sealed precincts of the author’s mind, that they strike us at last as acting not as simple human creatures, but as downright *amateurs* of the morally graceful and picturesque. To say that this is the ultimate impression of the poem is to say that it is not a great work. It is in fact not a great drama. It is, in the first place, an admirable study of character, — an essay, as they say, toward the solution of a given problem in conduct. In the second, it is a noble literary performance. It can be read neither without interest in the former respect, nor without profit for its signal merits of style, — and this in spite of the fact that the versification is, as the French say, as little *réussi* as was to be expected in a writer beginning at a bound with a kind of verse which is very much more difficult than even the best prose, — the author’s own prose. I shall indicate most of its merits and defects, great and small, if I say it is a romance, — a romance written by one who is emphatically a thinker.

HENRY JAMES, JR.